

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of the claims in this application:

1-56 (cancelled)

57. A system for monitoring and tracking a container in an environment, the container having a transmitter assigned a unique identification number, the transmitter being adapted to transmit the unique identification number, comprising:

a receiver for receiving the unique identification number and responsively generating a direction of travel code of the container as a function of the unique identification number;

a node computer coupled to the receiver for receiving the unique identification number and the direction of travel code from the receiver, and responsively determining a location of the container as a function of the direction of travel code and the unique identification number.

58. A system as set forth in claim 57, further comprising a controller computer coupled to the node computer and being adapted to receive the unique identification number and the location of the container from the node computer and to store the unique identification number and the location of the container.

59. A system as set forth in claim 58, further comprising a central computer facility coupled to the controller computer and being adapted to collect and store the unique identification number and the location of the container for exportation from the system.

60. A system, as set forth in claim 57, wherein the receiver includes a first antenna and second antenna, wherein the first antenna and the second antenna are placed at a portal in the environment and correspond to the direction of travel.

61. (New) A system, as set forth in claim 60, wherein the controller computer compares the location of the container to at least one predefined constraint to movement of the container stored in the controller computer to determine at least one violation in movement of the container and activating at least one warning device connected to the node computer, controller computer or central computer facility if the at least one predefined constraint of movement is violated.

62. (New) A system, as set forth in claim 61, wherein the warning device is selected from the group consisting of the following:

- (a) a user terminal or work station;
- (b) an electronic sign;
- (c) a voice synthesizer;
- (d) a speaker;
- (e) a monitor;
- (f) a video or digital camera; or
- (g) a pager system.

63. (New) A system, as set forth in claim 61, wherein the central computer facility links with at least one third party communication system to respond to the violation of movement of the container.

64. (New) A system, as set forth in claim 63, wherein the third party communication system is selected from the group consisting of the following:

- (a) a computer network;
- (b) a telecommunication network; or
- (c) a pager network.

65. (New) A system, as set forth in claim 57, wherein a record maintained by the controller computer stores the unique identification number and location of the container and the record being transferable to the central computer facility.

66. (New) A method, for monitoring and tracking at least one container in an environment, including the steps of:

- dividing the environment into a plurality of domains with at least one portal separating the domains;

- providing the container with a unique identification number;

- developing an electronic record for the identification number and recording a first location for the container;

- attaching a transmitter emitting the unique identification number to the container;

- providing a receiver at the portal;

- moving the container through the portal;

- receiving the unique identification number by the receiver when the transmitter passes through the portal and responsively determining a direction of travel of the container and generating a direction of travel code;

- sending the identification number and the direction of travel code from the receiver; and

- determining a second location of the container as a function of the direction of travel code and the first location of the container.

67. (New) A method as set forth in claim 66, including the step of storing the second location of the container in the electronic record of the container.

68. (New) A method, as set forth in claim 66, further comprising:

- defining at least one constraint to movement of the container in the record of the container;

- comparing the second location of the container to the constraint to movement of the container to determine at least one violation in movement of the container; and

- activating a warning device to respond to the violation in movement of the container.

69. (New) A method, as set forth in claim 68, wherein the warning device is selected from the group consisting of the following:

- (h) a user terminal or work station;
- (a) an electronic sign;
- (b) a voice synthesizer;
- (c) a speaker;
- (d) a monitor;
- (e) a video or digital camera; or
- (f) a pager system.